AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of predicting whether an individual having hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection will respond to interferon alpha (IFNα) treatment; the method comprising;

determining the presence or absence of antibodies reactive with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues ~~(~~94-117~~)~~ ~~peptide~~ (SEQ ID NO:1) in a pre-treatment sample obtained from the individual,

the presence of said antibodies in said sample being indicative that said individual will respond to said treatment.

2. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 comprising detecting the presence of said antibodies in said sample and thereby determining that the individual will respond to IFNα treatment

3. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 comprising detecting the absence of said antibodies in said sample and thereby determining that the individual will not respond to IFNα treatment

4. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the individual has chronic HBV infection.

5. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg positive.

6. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg negative.

7. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the antibodies are IgG or IgM antibodies.

8. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the sample is a blood, serum or plasma sample.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 comprising;

contacting the sample with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues (94-117) ~~peptide~~ (SEQ ID NO:1) and;

determining binding of said antibodies to said peptide.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 9 wherein the peptide comprises a detectable label.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 9 wherein said peptide is immobilised.

12. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 9 wherein said binding is detected with a labelled secondary antibody.

13. (Currently Amended) A kit for use in predicting whether an individual having hepatitis B will respond to interferon alpha (IFN α) treatment, the kit comprising;

a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues ~~(~~94-117~~)~~ ~~peptide~~ (SEQ ID NO:1).

14. (Original) A kit according to claim 13 wherein said peptide is immobilised on a solid support.

15. (Original) A kit according to claim 14 wherein the solid support is a microtitre plate.

16. (Previously Presented) A kit according to claim 13 further comprising a labelled secondary antibody which binds to human antibodies.

17. (Previously Presented) A kit according to claim 13 further comprising regents for detecting the binding of the labelled secondary antibody.

18. (Previously Presented) A kit according to claim 13 further comprising wash buffers.

19. (Previously Presented) A kit according to claim 13 further comprising sample-handling containers.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of treating a hepatitis B infection in an individual comprising;

identifying the individual as responsive to interferon alpha (IFNα) treatment using a method according to claim 1, and;

administering IFNα to said individual.

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20 wherein corticosteroid is administered to the individual.

23. (Cancelled).